

UNITED WAY OF THE MIDLANDS CONTACT:

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## **United Way of the Midlands Supports Student Success by Addressing Chronic Absence**

In the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area, approximately 18,500 students were chronically absent during the school year. Chronic absence can be defined as missing 10% or more school days throughout the academic year, whether the absences are excused, unexcused or disciplinary in nature.<sup>1</sup> This means chronically absent students miss more than 18 days – about a month of school – each year.

A growing body of research links consistent school attendance to improved academic performance, grade attainment, college graduation rates and related outcomes such as long-term financial stability. Yet chronic absence often goes unnoticed. Historically, schools count how many students show up every day rather than examining which students are missing numerous days and falling behind.

Data-informed, community-wide approaches have proven the most effective way to reduce chronic absence.<sup>2</sup> In light of this, United Way of the Midlands (UWM) has developed partnerships with a number of community organizations providing critical services to increase attendance rates and help students succeed in school and life.

The School Based Attendance Coalition (SBAC) has facilitated many of these valuable partnerships. Convened by UWM and the Greater Omaha Attendance and Learning Services (GOALS) Center, SBAC consists of nearly 30 nonprofit organizations, schools and government agencies dedicated to reducing chronic absenteeism. Through SBAC, UWM and other Coalition members work together to reduce barriers to regular attendance, conduct a community-wide awareness campaign for September's Attendance Awareness Month and host the annual Attendance Matters conference, which will take place beginning at 8:00 a.m. on October 4, 2018, at the Mid-America Center.

"Chronic absence is a problem we can solve when the whole community works with families and schools," says Melissa Mayo, the Director of Community Impact at UWM and the co-facilitator of SBAC. "All of us can make a difference by helping create a positive school climate that engages students and families in learning and sets the expectation that attendance matters."

UWM also partners with the Metropolitan Omaha Education Consortium (MOEC) to support student success. This group of school districts, education service units and colleges works with collaborators like UWM to develop community-wide educational initiatives. Attendance plays a vital role in MOEC and UWM's current initiative to help students achieve reading proficiency by the end of third grade, known as the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

"Attendance is one of the three main efforts of the Campaign," says Dr. Martha Bruckner, the Executive Director of MOEC. "Whether you're in preschool or kindergarten or ninth grade or twelfth grade, you need to be in school in order to learn."

In addition to these partnerships, UWM funds seven attendance-focused nonprofit programs in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro: School and Family Enrichment (SAFE) at Child Saving Institute, Inc.; South Omaha Schools Collaborative at Father Flanagan's Boys Home; GOALS Center at Greater Omaha Attendance and Learning Services; Pathways to Success at Latino Center of the Midlands; Omaha Home for Boys Residential Care Education Services at Omaha Home for Boys;

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and the Truancy Reduction Program and the Violence Prevention and Youthful Offender Re-entry Program at the Urban League of Nebraska.

For more information about local attendance resources, please visit [www.thereveryday.com](http://www.thereveryday.com).

**School Based Attendance Coalition Members:**

- Bellevue Public Schools
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands
- Boys Town
- Center for Holistic Development
- Child Saving Institute
- Completely Kids
- Council Bluffs Public Schools
- D2 Center
- GOALS Center
- Juvenile Assessment Center
- Latino Center of the Midlands
- Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties
- Midlands Mentoring Partnership (MMP)
- Millard Public Schools
- Omaha Public Schools
- Omni Behavioral Health
- Operation Youth Success
- Partnership 4 Kids
- Papillion LaVista Schools
- Project Harmony – Connections Program
- Raise Me to Read
- Ralston Public Schools
- Region 6
- The Hope Center for Kids
- Urban League of Nebraska
- Westside Community School District

**About the United Way of the Midlands**

Thanks to donors, volunteers and community partners, United Way of the Midlands is not only focused on addressing our community’s human needs today; it is focused on what can be, and what should be. It is building on today’s strong partnerships to create even more comprehensive human service efforts tomorrow, so our community can solve some of the root causes of poverty. United Way is community-based, community-focused. Thanks to those who share their strength, United Way is COMMUNITY STRONG. We invite you to visit [www.UnitedWayMidlands.org](http://www.UnitedWayMidlands.org) for more information.

1 <http://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/the-problem/>

2 <http://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence>

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